

# A guide to choosing an electrical contractor



Representing the best in electrical engineering and building services

The efficiency and safety of electrical systems is dependent upon their proper design, installation and maintenance.

Should such work be poor or faulty then it may cause failure, leading to injury, damage, inconvenience and loss.

Surprisingly, there is no statutory regulation of the qualification of the individuals and businesses undertaking such work.

## Putting your electrical work in professional hands



Therefore, clients requiring an electrical installation must make their own assessment of the competence, reliability and integrity of the company they may seek to engage.

However, they need not have this concern when using an ECA member company because the prequalification process has been made already by the Association's specialist staff. The work of ECA members is also covered by guarantees backed by insurers.

This work includes the design and installation of the services needed in homes, schools, hospitals, factories, industrial plant and commercial premises.

In addition to traditional power and lighting outlets, these installations may include complex high-technology control, telephone, data communications and security systems.

The 2,000 ECA members have a collective turnover in excess of £4 billion per annum.



QUALITY

VALUE

SAFETY



# The ECA's assessment process

Your assurance of quality and safety



ECA members range from large national companies offering a full engineering capability for major projects to small businesses providing a local or specialist service.

All members have a commitment to quality and customer care which is verified by the ECA's assessment processes.

The ECA inspects and prequalifies the whole of the potential member's corporate and financial structure, its commercial operating procedures, business practices and its complete technical competence, from reference manuals to final, complete installation.

## **The periodic technical assessment process**

The ECA also undertakes a periodic technical assessment of all its members to confirm that their work continues to be undertaken in compliance with the relevant standards, regulations and codes of practice.

The ECA's assessment covers all areas of the business's technical activity, including: design procedures (where undertaken), installation processes, documentation and staffing.





### Categories of work

Following the assessment, the ECA member will receive a certificate, which it may make available to its clients, detailing all the categories of work, as specified in European Specification 59004 (1998), in which it has been positively assessed.

These cover all categories of work including electrical installations in buildings and industry, security and fire alarm systems, process control systems, public lighting installations, communications and computer networks, etc. Special assessments are available for this work in hazardous areas.

## Certification of installation compliance – your work record

All employers (as plant and property owners and operators) have legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 to ensure that electrical installations and equipment in places of work are safe.

They should ensure also that fire alarm, emergency lighting and security systems meet the approved requirements of insurance agencies and fire officers.

Home owners also have a duty of care to ensure that their electrical installations do not provide a hazard or danger to occupants.

These requirements imply that the installation should comply with the appropriate British Standards and/or other regulations, and that it is maintained in a fit condition for its purpose.

The core British Standard relating to electrical installations is BS7671: 1992 Requirements for Electrical Installations.

It sets out installation requirements and specifies that a completion certificate, for all electrical installation work, including domestic work, should be issued by a competent person(s). It outlines the content and format for such certificates.

ECA members will provide the necessary certificates for the work they undertake, from the comprehensive range provided by the ECA, to give their clients an assurance that their work has been completed in compliance with the relevant standards.

The ECA's customer support services described below help to ensure that the client's work will be completed in compliance with the relevant standards, regulations and codes of practice to terms which are fair to both client and the contractor.

# Customer satisfaction and protection

## Standard forms of contracts, agreement and adjudication procedures

All clients should ensure that they have a formal contract for all the work which they are commissioning. The ECA promotes the adoption of equitable forms of contract between client and contractor. It provides guidance on these forms within the terms of its Bond scheme and in the following advisory publications to its members:



- Conditions of trading
- Conditions of tender and contract
- Inspection and testing agreement
- Agreement for maintenance work
- Agreement for the supply and installation of security systems
- Maintenance agreement for security systems
- Adjudication procedures

For further advice see the ECA publication *A Client Guide to the Certification and Procurement of Electrical Installations*.





### **The ECA Warranty**

The ECA's Warranty Scheme is underwritten by The Electrical Contractors' Insurance Company Ltd and provides, subject to the terms and conditions of the scheme, that if any work carried out by an ECA member fails to comply with the relevant standards it shall be rectified at no further expense. This warranty is valid for a period of six years commencing from completion of the contract and has a maximum limit of £100,000.

### **The ECA Bond**

The ECA's Bond, also underwritten by the Electrical Contractors' Insurance Company Ltd, provides, subject to the terms and conditions of the scheme, the claimant with an assurance that if the member's employment is determined for a specified reason, such as insolvency of the member, the additional cost of completion will be met by the insurer to a maximum limit of £100,000 or 10% of the member's contract value shown on its certificate.

### **Warranty and Bond certificates**

Certificates are issued to each ECA member and clients are recommended to request copies to verify their validity in support of the ECA Warranty and Bond Schemes.

### **Inspection on Demand service**

Any ECA member or client may request an Inspection on Demand, which provides an independent professional inspection of a given installation – subject to the terms of the scheme. The Inspection on Demand service will confirm whether or not the work complies with the relevant standards. If not, it will be rectified under the Warranty Scheme.

### **Code of Fair Trading**

ECA members follow a Code of Fair Trading registered with the Office of Fair Trading which sets out comprehensive trading arrangements which are fair to the customer and contractor.

### **Response to customer complaints**

The Electrical Contractors' Association will investigate reasonable complaints concerning its members' technical performance.

### **Customer advice, information and register of ECA members**

Publications covering the above services, and a register of members are available free from the ECA membership department or can be referenced on the ECA website, [www.eca.co.uk](http://www.eca.co.uk).

Since its foundation in 1901, the ECA has promoted electrical installation safety and quality.

During this time it has had a major influence upon the training, qualification and performance of the industry.

ECA members meet regularly, through its branch and regional network, to exchange advice and to contribute to discussions on the industry's development.

This network is served by eleven regional offices and support teams.

Through them and its specialist head office staff, the ECA provides a comprehensive advisory service, including business development training courses to its members.



## ECA – representing quality contractors

It has other substantial commercial interests which provide additional services in such areas as insurance, temporary labour supply, training, publishing and property management.

The ECA negotiates on behalf of the industry the National Working Agreement and Wage Rate with Amicus-AEEU.

It also contributes to the work of the government-appointed National Training Organisation in developing National Vocational Qualifications for those employed in electrical contracting.

It is part owner of the industry's principal managing training agency and its members employ and assist thousands of apprentices through to their qualification each year.



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